



Film Victoria

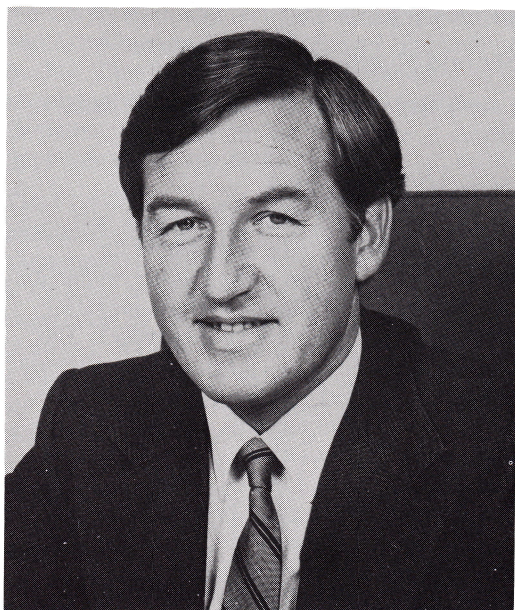
The Second Reading Speech on the Film Victoria Bill
presented to the Legislative Assembly of the Parliament of Victoria
by the Hon. Norman Lacy, M.P., Minister for the Arts
and Minister of Educational Services

6 October, 1981.

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Film Victoria Bill

Second Reading

I move that this Bill be now read a second time.

Purpose of the Bill

The purpose of this Bill is to create a new statutory authority to be responsible for Government activities related to the production and distribution of film in Victoria including film produced for educational purposes. The new organisation to be known as Film Victoria will be established by amalgamating the Victorian Film Corporation, the State Film Centre, and sections of the Audio-Visual Resources Branch of the Education Department. As a result, the unnecessary duplication of functions by the organisations will be avoided and the capacity of the Government to meet the present and future media needs of Victorians will be enhanced. Furthermore, access to film materials will be simplified and the benefits to be derived from the use of such materials will be enlarged.

Background

Over the last few years the view has been expressed that the quality of educational television should be improved, that local production initiatives should be encouraged and that distribution services should be rationalised. This has been evident at official inquiries into the granting of broadcast licences, at ministerial conferences and in published reports. In response I set up the Interim Board for Educational Film and Television in April, 1980. The Board was asked to prepare recommendations to the Government upon the structure and policies necessary to provide for the effective provision of educational film and television services in the longer term, and to consider the desirability of establishing an institute of educational film and television.

Members of the Board were drawn from the Victorian Film Corporation, the State Film Centre, the Education Department, a tertiary educational institution and a commercial broadcasting corporation. The views of the Interim Board have been conveyed to me through numerous progress reports and have been influential in developing the concept of Film Victoria. I would like to recognise the valuable contribution of Dr. Graham Whitehead (Chairman), Mrs. Elizabeth Connor, Mr. Ross Dimsey, Dr. Patricia Edgar, Mr. Tom King and Mr. John Stapp.

Another substantial influence on this Bill was my visit last year to the Children's Television Workshop in New York and the Ontario Educational Communications Corporation in Toronto. Subsequently, Dr. Whitehead, together with two other officers from the Education Department, Mr. Laurie Whittle and Mr. Russ Goodear, spent a much more substantial time with both organisations studying their operations. In particular, they looked at organisational structures and management, at how client needs were determined and met, at how new technology was used, at production procedures, and at the role of the educationalist in this process. The Executive Director of the Victorian Film Corporation, Mr. Ross Dimsey, has also recently visited TV Ontario and the South Australian Film Corporation seeking out information on facilities and finance procedures relevant to the new Corporation. In addition, I have had discussions with the Victorian Public Service Association, the Victorian Teachers Union and with officers of the organisations concerned in the proposed amalgamation.

The Victorian Film Corporation

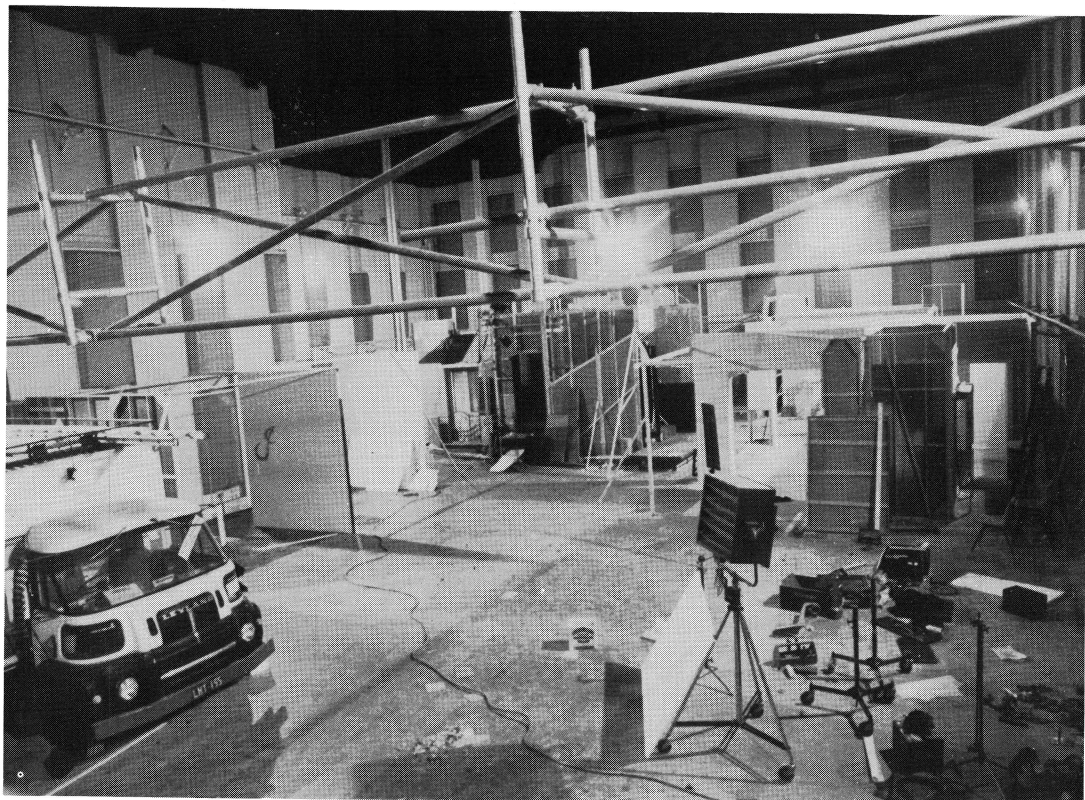
The Victorian Film Corporation was created in 1976 to foster and encourage the development of the film and television industry in Victoria. As a result of its activities in investment in script development and film production, and by the provision of loans for market development, the Corporation has become a vital element in the continued growth of the film and television industry in this State.

The opening of the Melbourne Film Studio in 1980 by the Corporation was another initiative which indicates the approach of the Corporation in developing the film industry by co-operation with private enterprise. The Government, through the Corporation, has underwritten the long-term lease on the studio which is being developed by private enterprise and which is available for sub-lease by production companies.

In its four years of operation the Corporation has wholly or partly financed upwards of twenty feature films, a number of television series and some seventy documentaries. When

the Corporation was formed its main objective was to encourage the production of films of quality. That these projects also enjoyed success at the box office has been desirable. However, the main aim has been the improvement of standards.

The Corporation is also responsible for the production of films for Government Departments. Although the actual production is tendered to private enterprise, it is supervised by the Corporation's executive producer. By this means more than a dozen documentaries are produced each year, on subjects varying from the importance of native fish in our rivers and streams to the examination of social issues such as the plight of homeless teenagers. That Government documentaries made in Victoria achieve a high standard of excellence is reflected in the large number of awards and commendations they receive. The utilization of external producers is a major factor in achieving this standard and we are also fortunate to have the expertise of the Victorian Film Corporation to supervise their work.



The Melbourne Film Studio

The Corporation's major role, however, is in investment in production of film and television programs. Its involvement begins at the script development stage where writers are supported to enable the development of their film and television concepts into script form. It is interesting to note that whilst not a production investor in "THE GETTING OF WISDOM", "THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER" and "WE OF THE NEVER NEVER", the Corporation was largely responsible in each case for the development of the scripts. Investment in production by a Government investor like the Victorian Film Corporation acts as a catalyst to private investors. The recently announced taxation incentives for the film industry have increased rather than lessened this need, since private investors are anxious to tap the expertise developed over the years which exists within the Corporation. Recent production investments are the television series: "WATER UNDER THE

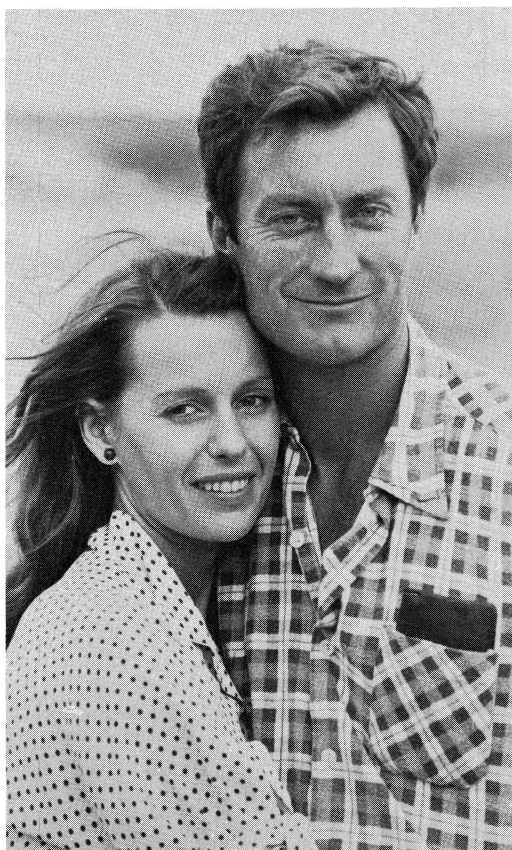
BRIDGE" and "A TOWN LIKE ALICE", and the feature films "PARTNERS" and "SQUIZZY TAYLOR".

The Economics of the Film Industry

It is valuable also to look at film in the broader economic sense and the image it creates for the State. The film and television industry, whilst directly employing relatively small numbers of people, is a labour intensive industry. Moreover, many of the service industries dealing with film are also labour intensive. Undoubtedly this creates a multiplier effect within the economy, as the production of a film utilizes a wide range of goods and services quite disconnected from the actual business of making pictures.

In the United States of America many of the States have now established their own film corporations, not for direct investment or funding purposes but simply to encourage and facilitate production of films in that State; this illustrates the realisation of the importance of a film industry operating in your territory. Additionally, the powerful effect which a healthy and viable film industry can have on a State's image abroad and on morale within the State cannot be overlooked. Of course, there is also the more obvious advantage of promoting tourism. When it is shown overseas, "THE MAN FROM SNOWY RIVER" will be a picture window on some of the most unique and spectacular country in this State — the Bogong High Plains.

The Victorian Film Corporation places a large emphasis on the importance of overseas marketing by supporting producers' sales ventures, not just for specific selling exercises but to gather intelligence about the way overseas markets work. Some of these ventures have been very successful, in particular the efforts of the Crawford Organisation, whose production "THE SULLIVANS" is now seen by some millions of people daily in both North and South America as well as Europe. However, exporting Victoria on celluloid or videotape is not just a dollar and cents exercise. The export of our culture on film has an immeasurable effect on more concrete commodities. This flow-on is an important factor in the Government's support of the Victorian film industry through the Corporation.



A TOWN LIKE ALICE

Helen Morse as Jean Paget and Bryan Brown as Joe Harman

The State Film Centre

The State Film Centre was set up in 1946 to acquire, distribute, exhibit and promote documentary films to community groups in the State of Victoria. It is essentially a free film and video lending library. As well, it is a public reference and information library and operates several theatres. It also offers film purchasing, and technical advice to Government Departments, instrumentalities and community groups.

The distribution section of the Centre services the needs of country borrowers through seventeen regional libraries. Currently, 20-25 per cent of the Centre's loans are to these libraries and as a result reach more than ½ million people. School borrowers number 1234 and there are 3206 community borrowers. The total audience of the Centre's loans was more than 2¼ million in 1980.

Large audiences are also attracted to the children's holiday film screenings and other screenings arranged in the Centre's theatres at Macarthur Street and the Government pavilion at the Royal Agricultural Showgrounds.

The free public reference and information library provides material on the many facets of feature and documentary films as well as providing advisory services to the teachers, researchers and students of film. In addition, the State Film Centre engages in several extension services to members of the community, performing an educational role by way of film and video workshops for primary school children and providing special curriculum-based screenings for years 11 and 12 media studies students.

The Audio-Visual Resources Branch, Education Department

The main aim of the Audio-Visual Resources Branch of the Education Department, sections of which form the third element to be amalgamated in Film Victoria, is to improve the quality of instruction and learning in schools by the application of appropriate audio-visual learning resources. The Branch provides an extensive range of audio-visual resource services and materials needed by schools. A free film lending library is maintained; technical advice is provided on



Children's film screening at State Film Centre Theatre

equipment purchases; assistance is given with the maintenance of equipment; and curriculum materials are developed in a variety of subject areas.

The Audio-Visual Resources Branch of the Education Department has established an excellent reputation in the field of educational film and television production. Two films made by the film production unit have won Australian Film Institute awards and others have represented Australia at the International Expo of Educational Films. Screenings have also taken place on Canadian and United States Public Television and on Australian Multi-cultural Television.

The Television Production Unit produces each year approximately thirty programs designed for school curriculum in Victoria. Several programs have reached final selection in the awards of the Television Society of Australia during the past two years. Recently, the International Tennis Foundation has sought to use the program "TENNIS TREMENDOUS" produced by the Unit, as an aid to the promotion of tennis throughout the world.

Rationalisation of Film Services

Each of these three organisations has something to offer the other in expertise and experience. However, it is the Government's view that the co-operation that has been growing between them over recent years can become even more productive by bringing them together into a single organisation. A more rational and integrated approach to planning, financing, producing, acquiring, disseminating and marketing of films and television programs is now required. It is our view that this can best be achieved where a single corporation is charged by the Government to undertake these tasks on its behalf.

The Benefits of Rationalisation

One of the benefits of the broader base that the new Corporation will have, will be its capacity to take advantage of the new and fast developing communications technology. Cable television, satellites, teletext, video tapes and video discs are already relatively common terms in our language. They will increasingly



Teaching video production, including mixing techniques, Audio-Visual Resources Branch

influence the quality of our lifestyles.

Victorians are aware of the role of satellites in bringing direct presentations of cricket, royal weddings and world crises into our homes. Although the use of cable television in the home is still being explored in Australia, it is widely used in North America. It gives the viewer a greater choice of programs, increases the demand for good quality programs by broadcasters and consequently improves production opportunities. Teletext is an information service just becoming available in Australia. With an appropriate decoder, a television viewer can get the latest information about the weather, international affairs and stock exchange reports. It is not difficult to envisage new additions from the field of education. With video disc we have a much greater storage capacity than is the case with video cassettes and it has the potential for interactive feedback. Overall, this new technology will provide direct access and significantly increase the amount of information, entertainment and educational resources available to a diverse and demanding audience.

Let me draw your attention to one of those audiences; those who can benefit from 'distance education'. Distance education is more effective when supported with the appropriate media — particularly television and film materials. This can mean that those isolated geographically can receive compensation for their situation through programs leading to formal qualifications or through programs of a non-formal nature.

Film Victoria will be capable of exploring the new communication modes that will enable it to more effectively reach its various target audiences. It is not too far distant in time when people in their homes will be able to interact with teachers and speakers through the medium of television. Work is currently proceeding at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology, and no doubt elsewhere, to produce systems whereby viewers can answer questions posed by presenters. The educational potential for such a system is enormous. The linking of television with computers provides another exciting educational vehicle that the Corporation cannot ignore. On all of these new developments the Corporation will be able to give advice to Government, to schools and to community groups.

Instead of three separate groups engaged in one or more of the many functions related to the Government's objectives for film in Victoria, the new organisation will be responsible for them all, including the financing, production, marketing, exhibition and distribution of films and television programs. By bringing these functions together under one organisation, relationships with commercial producers, investors, broadcasters and users in Victoria, and other States, and with national bodies, will be simplified.

By the employment of creative people with production and technical skills; educationalists with the knowledge of the interests of children and a knowledge of their learning skills; and persons with expertise in the communications industry and a vision of what can be achieved through film and television, Film Victoria will be able to take a leadership role in meeting the educational, information and entertainment needs of Victorians. This will allow us to bring to bear on any one task the particular perspectives and unique knowledge and skills of a wide range of professionals. In producing an educational film, the financial and marketing skills found in the Victorian Film Corporation will be able to be readily deployed. In planning the utilisation of programs, the educational expertise of educationalists will be immediately available.

Preliminary steps have been taken by both the Victorian Film Corporation and the Education Department in separate initiatives to develop high quality television programs for children. With the passage of this Bill, Victoria will be in a better position to continue these developments, to link in with the initiatives which may be undertaken by the proposed Australian Children's Television Foundation and to tap the resources of the private sector of the film and television industry. I would expect Film Victoria to take up the challenge to produce good children's drama for commercial television and to fill the present void in this area of children's television programming.

While to this point emphasis has been on film and television, I must stress that Film Victoria will not be limited to these two forms of communication.

Both the Children's Television Workshop in New York and the Ontario Educational Communications Authority in Canada have

demonstrated the importance of linking the written word with the visual image and spoken word. This is particularly important in the educational sphere. With every educational program produced there must be accompanying resource materials for use by teachers and students. The popular children's program "SESAME STREET" has its own magazine that is sold on the news-stands of North America. Similarly, the AVRBI film "DOING TIME" which explores the work of prisons, was produced with accompanying materials. Both film and materials have been well received in schools and are indispensable in achieving the desired educational objectives.

The size of the organisation achieved by the merger of the three groups brings other advantages. Financial economies can be achieved by bringing the three groups together physically, by allowing the adoption of modern office technology, and by the more extensive application of computer technology in the distribution of film. More importantly, the size of the corporation makes possible a greater extension of activities into the areas of research and marketing than was formerly possible.

Educational Films and Associated Material

The production of educational films and materials will be a major task of the Corporation. The production of educational films requires special skills and inputs. These films must grip the attention of the viewer. They must contain ideas to which he can relate. They must be within his intellectual grasp while at the same time challenging his current understandings. Unless they do these things the effort in producing them will have been wasted.

Too often in the past films and television programs have been produced which have not been adequately researched in terms of content or client needs. The evaluation of films either during the course of their development or on having been completed, has been rare. In part, this lack of basic preparation and monitoring has been due to time pressures. However, good programs will only come out of a detached and careful consideration of what should be portrayed, for whom, and for what purpose.

Although it is difficult to change a film once completed, the lessons learned from that experience should be documented to influence the direction of future productions.

One of the difficulties educational film makers have experienced in the past has been the lack of evaluation techniques which are time and cost efficient. To show sections of a film to a class of students and then collect and analyse these responses was a time consuming business: certainly too slow to influence the producer at work. Now research tools are available which can systematically collect responses from students to a range of detailed questions, analyse these responses and present the results on a television screen in a form that is easily understood by everyone. All this can be done in a matter of minutes through the use of a hand-held response unit, a micro-computer and appropriate computer programs. An outcome of this use of technology is better educational films.

Film Victoria will be in a position to take up and develop new ways of providing for the access of schools and the community to film. The Educational Access Television project is but one example of such a direction. During 1980, I arranged for the AVRBI in conjunction with HSV 7 to broadcast educational films produced by the Education Department, the Victorian Film Corporation and other agencies. The broadcasts take place prior to the start of normal transmission. Schools are made aware of what films are to be broadcast and at what time so they can arrange the taping of programs for use in the classroom in support of the school's normal curriculum. Initial evaluations of this service indicate that it has been highly successful. Similarly with my encouragement, and with the help of BTV Ballarat, the Country Education Project has arranged for the screening of films and information programs for use by HSC students. Both these services have now spread through regional networks so that almost all areas of Victoria are covered. These examples demonstrate how, with the goodwill of the television industry, the current capacity in the television industry can be used by the Government to achieve sound educational objectives.

Scope has been provided in the Bill for the employment of appropriate professional

officers and to harness the resources of both the Education Department and the media industry.

Staffing

In general, staff will be employed under the Public Service Act. However, the special employment needs of Film Victoria require greater flexibility and managerial autonomy in respect to employment matters than is currently provided to Departments operating under the Act. On the other hand, it is desirable that the Corporation makes use of the personnel policy skills and the industrial expertise available in the Public Service Board and that staff employed in the Corporation are able to enjoy Public Service conditions of employment and be part of the wider career service by employment under the Public Service Act.

These special needs have been met by provisions in this Act which allow for staff to be employed under the Public Service Act by a substantial delegation of Public Service Board powers to the Corporation. The transfer of such powers is, however, designed to be effected by Order-in-Council under clause 10 and will enable the Corporation to employ staff, classify positions, and undertake a range of other personnel functions without reference to the Public Service Board. In undertaking these activities, the Corporation would be subject to general policies and guidelines decided by the Public Service Board. In other respects the Corporation will operate as an element of the Public Service and be subject to the Public Service Board's normal effectiveness review responsibilities. To further facilitate the administration of personnel matters, the Director of the Corporation will, under the provisions of clause 10 (7), have permanent head status for the purpose of the Public Service Act.

While in general staff will be employed under the Public Service Act, the Bill does identify another category of staff whose conditions of employment need not be subject to that Act. The Governor-in-Council may, on the recommendation of the Corporation and after considering the views of the Public Service Board, declare a position in the Corporation

subject to the Public Service Act. In such a circumstance, conditions of employment will be determined by the Corporation and approved by the Governor-in-Council. This provision is important as it provides the Corporation with flexibility to recruit staff with practical experience in the various fields of film production in an industry where a high mobility of personnel is experienced.

In addition to the categories of staff I have already mentioned, the Bill makes provision for the secondment of staff from the Education Department. This would be done with the approval of the Minister of Education. Such a provision is important because it provides another way in which Film Victoria can keep in touch with its major client group. The people concerned could be involved in producing films, or providing advice to schools on using films. At the end of their secondment, these teachers would return to schools with benefits derived from working in another organisation, with a fuller understanding of the role of the media in education, and of how schools can influence and assist the work of the Corporation. Some of these teachers may take up positions of leadership in the Education Department's District Audio-Visual Resources Centres and provide a consultancy service on media education to schools.

The Victorian Public Service Association has been consulted regarding the general staffing framework and has indicated its support for the proposed arrangements.

Structure of Film Victoria

Fears have been expressed to me by teachers and teacher organisations that the concerns and needs of schools will be lost in an organisation with the broad objectives envisaged for Film Victoria. I wish to assure the House that these fears are groundless. While the Corporation will consist of a Chairman and ten members appointed by the Governor-in-Council, three of these will be nominated by the Director-General of Education. Other members appointed will include some who reflect the current range of interests and concerns of the Victorian Film Corporation and the State Film Centre.

Production Practices

As well as its direct involvement in the management and administration of Film Victoria, the Education Department will be a major client of the new Corporation. Where the Department requests the production of a film, the Corporation may choose to produce it in-house or to contract aspects of its production to private companies. By tapping the expertise of this State's highly skilled and experienced film and television industry, the production of effective educational films will be further facilitated. The production of good educational film is not simply a matter of putting together aesthetically pleasing pictures. For a film to achieve its planned educational objectives it must be the product of a partnership between producers, educationalists and researchers. In such a partnership no one role is subservient to another.

Wherever the Education Department commissions the production of a film, close liaison will be maintained between the Corporation and the Department. The Education Department officers will be amongst those who will be responsible for developing the brief for the film and for monitoring its production. At crucial stages in the production process such as the treatment stage, the script or storyboard stage, fine cut and double head stages, the Corporation will be obliged to report to its client.

It is proposed that the in-house production facilities envisaged for the new Corporation will be used for the production of educational films and television programs. The practice that has been successfully developed by the Victorian Film Corporation of contracting out to private enterprise the production of Government documentaries will also continue under the new organisation.



Acquiring on-camera interview skills necessary for educational video production, Audio-Visual Resources Branch

In relation to film library services, it is proposed to establish a film acquisition committee representative of clients to ensure that the film library effectively services its users. Schools and community groups can expect the continuation of services they have traditionally enjoyed, but to a higher standard.

It is envisaged that the funds available to the Education Department for both the production of films and television programs and the purchase of films for loan to schools would continue to be provided in the budget under the education vote. However, these funds would only be available for disposal by the Corporation. This arrangement provides a suitable managerial balance. It provides a means whereby the Education Department, as the client, can ensure that it obtains the products and services for which funds have been provided to a standard satisfactory to it. The Corporation, on the other hand, is able to plan its program and assign resources because it knows what demands will be placed upon it.

Management Structure

To bring the multifarious activities of the Corporation together requires a management structure that reflects appropriate functions, provides for clear lines of communication and precisely defines the roles of its officers.

The details of such a structure need to be determined by the Corporation once it has been established. However, a management structure which has already been considered by the Interim Board for Educational Film and Television and by me makes provision for four functional divisions; Administration, Finance and Marketing, Acquisition and Distribution, and Materials Production, Utilisation and Research. The Administration division would provide legal, data processing and secretarial services and be responsible for staff development. The Finance and Marketing division would prepare budgets and provide accountancy services. It would manage the funds received through Government grants, private investments, sponsorships, donations and from the hire of facilities and the sale of products. Additionally, this division would ensure that the objectives of Film Victoria and its activities are constantly placed before the community. Necessarily, part of this activity would include the aggressive development of

markets in Australia and overseas for the Corporation's products.

The Acquisition and Distribution division would be involved in selecting, purchasing, cataloguing and storing film and television materials. These materials would be available through direct loans, dubbing, electronic transmissions and screenings. This division would also be responsible for maintaining the Corporation and client's projection equipment.

As the title implies, the Materials Production, Utilisation and Research division would have three main tasks. Part of the production service would entail script appraisal and program development. When the production of a film is done by outside production agencies this division would be responsible for monitoring its progress. When an educational film is to be produced in-house this division would undertake the task. This same division would arrange the development of materials to accompany films and assist in the organisation of seminars and film festivals. Staff in this division would be knowledgeable about media education and dissemination strategies. They would undertake appropriate research to ensure that educational programs produced achieved the objectives set out for them.

Information Dissemination

Another task to which the Board will have to give some attention is communication. An early initiative may well be the development of new information networks as well as linking us to those already existing. In addition to the twenty-four District Audio-Visual Resource Centres, and the seventeen Regional Libraries contacts might be developed with Colleges of Advanced Education, Community Education Officers, the Council of Adult Education and other Educational Institutions.

Part of this information service needs to reach directly into schools to keep teachers informed of films being produced, films available and other services provided. A contact person in each school would be an essential means of ensuring the access of the Corporation to schools and of schools to the Corporation. Such a person would be the major agent in helping the Corporation achieve its objectives, determine needs, and be an advocate for media education and the Corporation in the school.

Physical Amalgamation

An immediate task of Film Victoria will be to bring the organisation together physically. Currently the components of the proposed enterprise are distributed amongst five sites. Consideration needs to be given to siting Film Victoria in a place that guarantees easy access to schools and members of the community while at the same time facilitating access of its own staff to the media industry.

The Future of Film Victoria

In all the concept of Film Victoria is an exciting one and one which will bring much credit to this State. Through its activities we can extend and expand learning and entertainment opportunities for all members of the community. Moreover, it will provide a sound basis from which we can launch new initiatives in media and take advantage of the rapidly developing communications technology.

I commend the Bill to the House.